

## Potluck or Potbelly?

This question was included in the *Team Power* survey:

Which best describes work **potlucks**?

- ☐ Our group's potlucks nearly always offer a variety of foods that include at least a couple of nutritious choices (healthy salads, vegetarian entrées, fruit-based desserts, etc.)
- ☐ Our group potlucks offer tasty favorites, but rely heavily on cheesy selections, high fat foods, rich desserts, etc. Definitely room for improvement.
- ☐ Not applicable. Our group seldom has potlucks.



If you checked the second statement, it may be time for some gradual changes. Following are suggestions for a healthier approach to group potlucks:

### Potluck diners:

1. If beverage choices at the potlucks you attend are limited mostly to coffee or sodas, plan to bring your own water bottle or favorite tea.
2. Bring a healthy dish to insure that there is something you can eat and enjoy at potlucks.
3. The advice to avoid going hungry to a party or the grocery store also applies to potlucks. Don't skip breakfast for a noon potluck. Instead, add in a walk and/or plan to eat a little lighter at dinner. Learn to "bank" your calories for special events and meals eaten away from home.
4. For any buffet-style dining, look over all of the selections before you fill your plate. Make conscious choices about what you really want to try and what you can skip.
5. Learn how to deal with "food pressure" from well-meaning coworkers. Trying a small taste of everything can be a good strategy. Responses like "Thank you ... the taste I had was delicious" may be useful. Avoid saying that you're on a diet. Try not to let your self-esteem be influenced by the food that you prepare. If you're afraid of the response you might get by lightening up your famous cheese enchiladas, find something new to bring instead!
6. Practice portion control. Many people bring large amounts of food to potlucks. Don't be tempted to eat more than you need to satisfy hunger.

### Potluck organizers:

7. Get feedback (formal survey or informal) about how often potlucks should occur. Weekly, monthly, quarterly? Potlucks are a fun work break, but they offer up many of the same temptations as eating out.
8. Most importantly, **keep it safe**. Distribute or post food safety guidelines in a prominent work area.

Cooking for Groups: A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety (USDA brochure)

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/cfg/cfg.htm>

7 Food Safety Steps for Successful Community Meals (2 page companion to above brochure)

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/cfg/7Steps\\_2.pdf](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/cfg/7Steps_2.pdf)

Safe Handling of Complete Meals to Go Brochure (also available in PDF)

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/mealtogo.htm>

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/mealtogo.PDF>

9. Post or distribute a sign-up list. If you're trying to move towards healthier options, the sign-up can include categories and suggestions that gently guide people in the right direction. See sample **POTLUCK SIGN-UP** that follows.

# Potluck Sign-Up \_\_\_\_\_

Day/Occasion



Please be sure to review the suggestions for Food Safety at Potlucks posted/distributed:

## Beverages (Suggestion: Sparkling water and fruit juice, Herbal tea, etc.)

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## Entrees (Suggestion: Vegetable-based, Entrees with less or light cheese, Lightened up New Mexican entrees, etc.)

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## Salads/Vegetables (Suggestion: Yogurt or tomato-based dressings, etc.)

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## Side Dish (Suggestion: Whole grain, recipes with nuts, etc.)

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## Bread (Suggestion: Whole grain, lowfat spreads or dipping oils, etc.)

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## Dessert (Suggestion: Fruit-based, yogurt or lowfat milk-based, etc.)

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